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ABSTRACT

A comprehensive Career Education Project for 10 secondary non-urban high schools in Missouri has been developed to implement job development and job placement programs and follow-up of area high school seniors. The program components seek to: (1) establish a Centralized Job Placement Office; (2) implement a job placement service in each high school; (3) establish a centralized career information and audiovisual library; (4) establish working relationships with community employers; (5) follow up graduates and drop-outs; (6) provide selected seniors with a two-week on-the-job-work experience in a field of interest; and (7) develop a Model Job Placement Guide and directory of job opportunities. Participating schools encourage a team approach to job placement by utilizing the available human resources such as superintendents, principals, teachers, students and community employers. Brief questionnaires distributed to participating counselors, teachers and students were utilized to obtain information needed for program implementation. (GMF)

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A COMPREHENSIVE JOB PLACEMENT PROGRAM FOR SECONDARY, NON-URBAN HIGH SCHOOLS

by Travis Montgomery

A commitment to offer comprehensive job placement services to all exiting graduates is one goal included in the State Fair Community College Career Education Project. Also, early school leavers as well as high school graduates in the ten non-urban school districts in three Central Missouri counties are involved in the project.

This three-year, federally-funded exemplary project housed at State Fair Community College addresses itself to the design and implementation of a broad, comprehensive program of job development, job placement, and follow-up of area high school seniors.

Enrollment of seniors in the ten high schools varies from 27 students in one rural high school to the high school with the largest class enrollment of 365 seniors.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goals and objectives of the job placement component include major emphasis centered on seven overall objectives, which include:

1. Establishing a Centralized Job Placement Office in Sedalia.
2. Implementing a job placement service in the ten participating high schools.
3. Establishing a working relationship with area employers.
4. Organizing a cooperative program in job placement with the Missouri State Employment Service.

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5. Conducting a follow-up of graduates and early school leavers.

6. Helping students become more knowledgeable of post-secondary career programs.

7. Development of job placement models for area high schools.

JOB PLACEMENT SERVICES TO TEN HIGH SCHOOLS

Providing job placement services to all ten high schools demands frequent and personal visitations in order to coordinate the job placement program with counselors or, as in four rural schools, designated counselor/administrators.

One of the first activities in developing job placement programs in the ten schools was to survey all seniors to determine their need for job development and placement activities and to determine their need for career development services.

Program data was gathered by use of the Student Career Placement Questionnaire, The World of Work Survey, and the Career Plans Survey. The 78-item instruments were developed to obtain information useful in establishing baseline data for program implementation.

Response from the 855 survey questionnaires were tabulated, analyzed, and results reported to school personnel in each of the ten high schools. Significant findings from results of the surveys served as a basis for developmental activities in the job placement program.

Counselors from the ten high schools participating in the job placement program were given a 68-item survey questionnaire covering four broad categories. Results indicated that none of the counselors were providing formalized job placement services for their students.

High school teachers representing 75 percent of the target population completed a 21-item survey questionnaire. Baseline data for

program implementation was obtained on the extent to which secondary teachers were involved in job development and placement activities.

Results of the surveys were discussed with students, counselors, teachers, and administrators in helping students formulate career goals and in modification of courses of study.

CENTRALIZED CAREER RESOURCE CENTER

The establishment of a centralized career information and audio visual library is included as part of the project. The library is housed in State Fair Community College's Learning Resources Center; and included are books, periodicals, and a variety of audio-visual materials for use by all schools in the ten districts on a loan basis. All school personnel are given an opportunity to select materials for the Career Resource Center.

PROJECT DISCOVERY

All too often job and career exploration are attempted through formal teaching of occupational information where facts about jobs are presented and some encouragement is given to reading about occupations in books. Students know many facts and have an abundance of impressions about work, but do not seem able to use the existing information personally and creatively.

In order to provide seniors with a realistic method in which to evaluate their career choices, two school districts permitted their seniors to have an opportunity to participate in Project Discovery. Seniors were excused from formal classroom work for two weeks in order to devote an equivalent amount of time to a job which was preselected by the student. Each senior devoted a considerable amount

of research to the selection of a work site and was encouraged to find his own job. Assistance was provided students who planned to relocate to out-of-the-area sites for their work experience.

Students were encouraged to obtain non-salaried jobs which allowed them the opportunity to explore a specific career that they were interested in pursuing in the future.

Each student was responsible to an on-site supervisor who served as the school's contact person. Parental permission was obtained in order for a student to participate in Project Discovery.

At the conclusion of their two-week work experience, seniors completed a 24-item evaluation of their employers, on-the-job training, and their career plans as a result of their work experience. Employers completed a Work Adjustment Rating Form consisting of 40 items relating to observable work behaviors.

CABLE T V PROJECT

Television is being used to promote the job placement program to local employers and to the community. The college's Learning Resource Center T V studio facilities have been utilized in production of television spot announcements which began on April 2nd. These spot announcements featuring local work-bound seniors, parents of work-bound seniors, school personnel and local employers will be shown on area television nine times a week for a total of 197 times through June 30th.

Evaluation of the effective use of television in obtaining job openings for the work-bound is included in part of the project's activities.

THE CENTRALIZED PLACEMENT OFFICE

The Centralized Job Placement Office, located on State Fair Community College's campus, assumed the responsibility for coordinating many aspects of the job placement program. A systematic record-keeping system was established and the utilization of carefully selected forms enhanced day-to-day placement record-keeping as well as communicating with area employers. Participating schools established their own systematic record-keeping system for their job placement programs.

Regular workshops are conducted in the refinement of the centralized job placement procedures and in types of activities to be implemented in the program. Extensive use of the telephone has been maintained with participating schools concerning all phases of the job placement program.

WORKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH EMPLOYERS

Job development activities with business and industry in the three-county area has been an on-going function of the Centralized Job Placement Office. Coordination between businesses and industries in the area with local guidance counselors is of primary importance. Guidance counselors are included in personal visitations to local businesses and industries, in job development activities, and in placing their students on jobs.

A project to determine if contents of a letter from the Centralized Placement Office to employers will elicit job openings for high school seniors was implemented in the spring. Two types of letters written in different styles were sent to a total of 80 employers. Forty employers received letters which were written in the "hard sell"

approach while the other forty were written with the "soft sell" approach. Responses indicate that the "hard sell" approach to job development have resulted in many job openings for area seniors. Area media are utilized in advertising the school job placement program and the occupational categories in which qualified seniors need jobs. Over 200 Career Education Newsletters as well as Career Education and Job Placement brochures are sent to local employers, civic and community organizations. Appearances before local civic organizations are on-going public relations activities.

ADVISORY COMMITTEES

The use of advisory committees is an effective way to arrange for long-range extensive and in-depth involvement of business, industry, and community agencies in education. Involvement of these committees can be invaluable to any school's job placement program. Local schools are establishing their own advisory committees composed of parents, students, teachers, and representatives of business and industry.

MISSOURI STATE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

The Missouri State Employment Security is an established public service agency providing, among its other services to Missouri residents, job placement for youth who are included in the projects target population.

Seniors have been offered the opportunity to register for a job with the agency prior to their graduating this spring. Schools have encouraged their seniors desiring assistance from local employment offices to register several weeks prior to graduation. Extensive use of state merit job openings for high school graduates has

been encouraged.

JOB BANK

A proposal to locate the Missouri Division of Employment Security's Job Banks in all ten high schools has been submitted. Supressed microfiche of all their job openings in Missouri would be made available on a daily basis to participating schools. This is one form of technology available to facilitate career development and promises to be an excellent learning device for students. The Job Bank will, among other things, assist in educating youth to its services and provide students with an opportunity to study job openings, employer requirements and wage scales.

The State Employment Service provided a selected school in the project the use of a viewer and microfiche on an experimental basis.

POST-SECONDARY PROGRAMS

The job placement program is not designed to merely place a student on a job. It must challenge students to aspire toward the greatest possible degree of vocational development and help students become knowledgeable of post-secondary programs so they may attain the highest degree of vocational development. Employment-bound seniors in the ten high schools were given the opportunity to increase their awareness of potential future employment and educational opportunities by participating in State Fair Community College's Business and College Day.

FOLLOW-UP

The success of the job placement program in the ten participating high school districts is determined by what happens to their

graduates after they are placed. The accountability of the job placement program is based on the percentage of graduates and drop-outs still employed or enrolled in a post-secondary program within three months after successful placement.

Participating schools use a variety of methods ranging from computerized cards to a formal one page follow-up questionnaire in conducting follow-up of their graduates. Graduates are, to some extent, followed up by personal contact and on-the-job visitation.

Follow-up conducted by counselors depends upon several variables: resources of the person conducting follow-up activities, scope and analysis of the follow-up, and the way in which schools make use of follow-up results. Changes or modification in school curriculum, implementation of new courses of study, and the utilization of in-service training for faculty members in which results of follow-up studies are utilized are on-going activities within schools.

DEVELOPMENT OF A MODEL PROGRAM

A Model Job Placement Program is being developed by area school personnel that will be of value to other school districts that are in the process of establishing their own job placement program. A Model Job Placement Guide is being developed by participating counselors.

A directory of job opportunities in the three-county area and a community resource guide has been prepared for use by high school seniors who plan to enter the world of work. High school counselors and other school personnel engaged in teaching career information classes have found the information in the directory very helpful.

The directory is based on the premise that if high school students

and the world of work are to be brought together, information on area businesses, industries, community resources, and sources of occupational information is essential for career decision making.

JOB PLACEMENT, WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY?

Participating schools have developed a team concept approach to the school job placement services in which there is utilization of the superintendent, principal, teachers, students, and the community. The establishment of a job development, placement, and follow-up program is not what one counselor can do, but what the "team" can do in a cooperative effort in helping youth in seeking and finding that all-important first job.